

ATTACHMENT #4

Letter from Eric W. McAuley Furnished to NTSB by FMCSA

(4 pages)

My name is Eric W. McAuley. My wife, Gina and I have a small mom-and-pop auto repair shop in Aransas Pass, TX.. We have been here approxametly 2 years now. Our shop generally does routine maintenance and service work, however, I do have some experience with diesel trucks and trailers, and we do occasionally take in that type of work.. We are currently under agreement with the owner of three semi's, to perform preventative maintenance, and light mechanical work..

My first experience with Global Limo came about because I was the only repair facility open on Sunday. I was also the only one in town with the space to park the bus. Global Limo appeared to have a dedicated run to the Texas Treasure Casino Cruise, and I was only a block out of route.

April 15th, 2005 - Bus #710

Global Limo's first visit to the shop was for a bad fan belt. I determined that the belt had been arranged wrong on the pulleys, and improperly adjusted. The driver indicated that he had been having enough trouble with the fan belt to carry a new one with him. I replaced it, and also readjusted the tensioner.. The driver paid me 20.00 for this service. At this time, I thought that this may be an opportunity for us to get a fleet deal with this company, and I was satisfied with the deal.

May 28th, 2005 - (bus # unknown)

The second time I saw a Global bus was in May, when one came in with bad headlights. I also noticed several minor exterior lights were not working I worked on it for several hours, and finally got the headlights working by creating my own independent circuit. During that time, several other circuits behind the dash were failing at random.. Bare wires were visible behind the dash, and several more wires looked shorted and burned. The driver of that bus put me in touch with his boss, James Maples, who connected me with an experienced and extremely knowledgeable electrician who walked me through the system, over the phone, as I was unfamiliar with the dual voltage electrical systems in a bus. The electrician determined that the problem was in a circuit board in the back, and we were able to correct it. Mr. Maples also arranged for another bus to pick up the passengers. At that time, I was impressed with the resources that Mr. Maples was able to bring to bear. He seemed truly concerned with the safety and well-being of his passengers, and drivers, despite what his drivers had hinted at. The charge for my services that day was 100.00, to be paid by mail, or by hand the next time they came our way. Mr. Maples seemed pleased with the end results, and agreed to send me a service manual so that I could become more familiar with these vehicles..

June 26th, 2005 - Bus #712

The driver came into the shop that day with a complaint about no parking brakes. He told me that he had to park against a curb or other solid object, because without holding his foot on the brake pedal, the bus would simply roll away. The bus was equipped with "pedal" brakes on all three axles, but only was only equipped with "parking" brakes on the drive axle. I then determined that both drums and shoes were ruined on the drive axle.. The wear on the drum was at least 1/4" deep. The brake shoes could not even touch the brake drums. I tried adjusting them until the "s cam" turned completely around, and past its furthest reach. If adjusted beyond this

point, the shoes would "roll off" the "s cam", and we would have to start over. This left about 1/3rd of his brake system gone, and had rendered the parking/emergency completely useless. I spent approximately 2 hours trying to make them work, but I was unsuccessful. I then called Mr. Maples. I believe I spent 30 minutes trying to explain the severity of the situation. I'm sure he understood, but he wanted to make "one more run", and so turned down the brake job at that time, advising his driver to finish his route, and assuring us that he would send parts on the next bus, and we would do a brake job. I charged him 25.00 for the estimate (which he never paid).

Two weeks later, I called him and asked again about the brakes - it was mainly a scheduling issue with me, and again, Mr. Maples assured me that the parts were on their way. Some time later, I called again, and a secretary informed me that the bus had been taken off of long distance runs, and was now running only a local route. She did not know if the brakes had been repaired. The driver had told me that Mr. Maples wasn't going to fix the brakes, and at this point, I was beginning to believe he was right.

July 15th, 2005 (Bus # unknown)

On this run, the bus with the previous electrical issues was back again. I attempted to fix, or at least analyze the charging problem. On this bus, I noticed at least two floor pans that were not secured to the floor. The rear seat did not appear to be bolted down at all. I did not look closely, but I believe one of the televisions was about to fall off. I determined that the alternator was bad, and spoke to Mr. Maples about repair. Again, he declined repairs at that time. I did not charge for that bit of diagnostics, even though I had not been paid for my last service, and still had not received my service manual.

July 16th, 2005 (Bus #710)

On this rare rainy day, the driver came in with only one windshield wiper working, and had an issue with the door solenoid. The driver was unable to operate the main door to the bus properly. The button was broken, and it was necessary for the driver to reach behind the dash panel to open the door. Again, I contacted Mr. Maples with a functional solution, and again, he declined repairs. I charged 25.00 for the wiper repair (again, never received), and sent the driver on his way.

Over the course of time, my requests for payment were ignored. The drivers seldom had more than 20.00 on them. I began to see this as a bad maintenance contract, and stopped answering Global's calls.

In the beginning, I saw Mr. Maples display the ability and concern necessary to take care of these buses. Our conversations were always cheerful, and he seemed pleased with my work and location. He promised me he would send the service manuals soon, so I could become more familiar with them. It didn't take long to see that this wasn't going to happen. While working on these buses, there was always casual conversation with the drivers about how difficult it was to get even minor repairs done. Almost all his drivers had warned me against using my own money for parts. I related to them my experience with OTR trucking, and how my boss would have fired me for not reporting defective equipment, and how my employer maintained one

truck as a spare. I mentioned how to get yourself "flagged" at any DOT scale house. I was told that was pretty much the same as quitting, and that the driver would simply be replaced. I knew that Mr. Maples could produce a spare bus because I had seen it happen. As I understand, that bus is junk also. Most of the conversations I had with Mr. Maples revolved around "can it make one more trip?" Even when I told him no, that was not a good idea, he generally declined parts and repair. His plan became one of "can you jury-rig it??" so the bus could keep on moving. The money stopped coming, and so I gave up on the whole thing, and forgot about it until the recent events brought it back. Clearly, Mr. Maples could have taken much better care of the buses, but he chose not to, and I was never given a reason why. His drivers were concerned about their jobs, and at least one was concerned about his safety, and the safety of his passengers. Repairs cannot be made if parts and permission are not given. My personal experience with this company indicates the entire fleet of buses was subject to deliberately poor maintenance and neglect.

Eric W. McAuley
A Good Mechanic
Aransas Pass, TX.

Signature

Date